ARCHIVE

There are several productive tensions between archiving—the collection of documents, objects, photographs and other material to create historical records—and reenactment practices. Archives, whether formal or informal, aim to act as a source of information about the past, that are laid down away from normal social use, for future interpretation. In Pierre Nora's terms, an archive is a *lieu de mémoire,* a space that contains "moments of history torn away from the movement of history, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded" (1989, p.12). By contrast, reenactment seems to fit more easily into the category of activities that create what Nora calls *milieux de mémoire*: rich, living environments of memory that are intended to produce a social sense of historical continuity (SEE MEMORY / COMMEMORATION).

Archives and reenactment have typically been deployed differently by different historical practitioners. Professional historians have, until recently, relied almost entirely on the written archive as a source from which to conduct analysis and then draw their accounts of the past. Reenactors, on the other hand, often express the desire to go beyond the perceived petrification of historical experience in professional historical scholarship. Depending on the form of reenactment in question this going beyond may have various ambitions. It may be an effort to recall haptic or sensorial aspects of historical experience. It may be an effort to capture subaltern histories, or other forms of subjectivity that are not represented in the archive. Alternatively, where the goal of a reenactment is commemorative or restorative, the epistemological function of the archive might be subsumed to the socio-cultural importance of the *act* of commemoration. Although reenactors of all kinds might frequently draw from archival records to inform their work and to augment the perceived authenticity of their reenactments, the archive does not hold such a core legitimizing function in their activities.

Yet in recent years the use of these forms of record within differing communities of historical practitioners is becoming more hybrid. Some academic historians are drawing on more diverse forms of source material and supplementing the analysis of written texts with the creative interpretation of *milieux de mémoire*. Equally, the digitization of archival material alters expectations and practices around the availability of records that have been systematically preserved in *lieux de mémoire.* Archives are increasingly accessible to a wider range of historical practitioners, including reenactment societies, and researchers for film and television, potentially altering expectations about accuracy and authenticity in reenactments (SEE AUTHENTICITY).

These changes in patterns of creation and use of historical memory have been accompanied by an interrogation of definitions: what counts as an archive? What do archives *do*? And, what are they *for*? Scholarship across various disciplines has begun to explore archives not only as stores of record, but as environments with embodied practices and traditions, that might offer sociocultural prompts for the reenactment of their own past. Equally, it is increasingly common to encounter phrases such as "the body as archive" or "the city as archive". These suggest that the historical legacies carried by the fabric of the human body and the built environment can also be drawn upon as sources of record and used for the analysis of past historical experiences (SEE BODY / EMBODIMENT). Nora's distinction between the idea of a mediated, decontextualized form of documentary history, and an unmediated authentic domain of living social memory is becoming harder to defend. The rapprochement of these two seemingly opposing domains puts the archive in an interesting and evolving relationship with reenactment.

The contemporary perspective that archives are more than simply stores of knowledge owes a great deal to the work of Foucault (see, for example, Foucault, 2002). For Foucault,

archives—as well as libraries and museums—reflect the interests and world view of those who have the means to lay down a record, notably the state. He promoted an archaeological approach to explore the effect of power relationships on the production of knowledge. In order to understand those power relationships, historians have paid closer attention to the creation of archives: archiving as a process. Through this lens the institutional activities of archives (especially classification) became subject to critical scrutiny. Subsequently, the architectural housing for archives and the material stuff they contain have also come under historical interrogation.

An interest in the processes of *creating* archives has led scholars to be more reflexive about the experience of *using* archives. Thus, it is possible to identify a proto-reenactive approach to the archive in a strand of Marxist-inflected history that critically considers the experience of using archives as indicative of the conditions of their production (Rose, 2000; Samuel, 1994; Sekula, 1986). We can also find a proto-reenactive approach to the archive in accounts that highlight the affect of archival work. For example, in *Archive Fever*—Derrida's examination of the psychology of the archival impulse—he invites us to imaginatively relive the moment that his thought became a written record. Derrida recreates the phenomenology of the words taking shape on the screen of his portable computer, and that of the act of "saving" a text electronically (1996, p. 25). Steedman's *Dust* (2001) is a meditative reflection on her physical experience of archival material as form of relationship with the bodies of those who produced the paper and glue, and efforts of those who have maintained its physical integrity. Accounts of archives such as these encourage attention to the gestures and experiences of the historical actors who created them.

More recently, scholars have moved beyond imagining the work of creating and keeping records and begun to physically reenact those processes. In a straightforward

definition of the archive these investigations address very mundane techniques of record-keeping and very commonplace skills such as typing, indexing, and filing. This work has precedents in both media archaeology and social history. Media historians and literary scholars have long explored documentary technologies from the quill to the digital camera. See, for example, Kittler's interrogation of the term "typewriter" as meaning both a machine and the machine's operator (1999). Equally, historians and sociologists have studied the conditions of clerical workers (Anderson, 1976, Lawrance *et al.*, 2006). However, by taking up reenactment as a method, historians hope to access the immediate embodied experiences of the invisible technicians of the written record and to reinstate their role in the writing of history (Haines, 2017).

Paperwork is only one of a wider range of techniques and experiences of historical preservation being reenacted. Wenzel Geissler and Kelly (2017) describe reenacting the creation of scientific data in a biological Field Station in Tanzania. Patchett (2016) has used reenactment to explore the history of the practice of taxidermy. De Silvey (2007) uses the term reenactment to describe her creative investigation of the remnants of domestic collections found in an abandoned North American homestead. Although we associate archives with the abstraction and standardization of historical experience, all these various studies highlight that archives and archival practices are not removed from broader social contexts. Records, even documentary records, are localized within specific sites, technologies, and traditions. Seen in this way archives are more than sites for the accumulation of historical evidence (SEE EVIDENCE), and they are not "torn away from the movement of history" (Nora 1989, p.12). They are environments from which past activity can, potentially, be revived.

Elsewhere challenges are being made to the term archive through studies in which codified, intentional forms of historical record are brought into dialogue with environments that carry historical memory in less obviously structured ways. Reenactment practices in various guises have played an important role in the creative interpretation and representation of history from these expanded archives, embracing multiple modes of historical work, and arenas of practice (Pearson and Shanks, 2001).

This scholarship is most strongly developed in performance studies. Researchers in performance studies have found interesting resonances between multiple trajectories for the historical memory of dance or theatrical experiences. Many creative performances are based on a script (or a score in music), which in some senses can be considered the original document. However, theatrical or musical archives usually also include the documentation of performances, based on a script, in text or audiovisual formats. Alongside any deliberately archived records, cultures and traditions of performance develop. Through the adoption of a style or technique, performers take on historical modes of performance including the conscious and unconscious mimicry of gestures and attitudes (Borggreen and Gade, 2013). Some scholars suggest that performers can use their own bodies as a source to explore the legacy of learned performance traditions, i.e. a performer's body can be read as an archive (Lepecki, 2010). The body-archive is obviously highly individualized and as well as challenging the primacy of the codified archival record, the body-archive also challenges the idea of an objective historical analysis.

Although many critical studies of this kind have addressed records of creative or artistic performance, similar approaches have been taken to daily life and mundane social practices. Taylor (2003) expands the idea of performance to include social behaviours (behaviors that she calls the "repertoire"). She considers how individuals might perform

preconditioned responses to celebratory events or traumatic ones such as 9/11. Those responses might be prompted by broadcast media or other codified cultural expressions, but they are then reproduced in ordinary social interaction. In this way, for Taylor, the archive and the repertoire, "exist in a constant state of interaction" (2003, p. 21).

Other scholars have examined the capacity of physical environments to act as a form of archive. De Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) proposes that we can use urban spaces as a kind of historical record of daily life. Mundane political acts are not always the subject of self-conscious record-making, nonetheless we can read their traces (for example, how pathways are worn into existence through habitual use). This approach offers the opportunity to work imaginatively with the material substrate of urban life. Rao (2009) suggests we can use the city as archive to explore the lived experience of urban density, while Roberts (2014) points out that digital archives are increasingly interwoven with our use of city spaces. We access them on our phones, "on the move" and they shape our experience of the city. Does it make sense to see archive and activity as separate in that case? Studies such as these bring new definitions of acts and experiences into the purview of reenactment.

Through several different strands of work, then, we find the definition of archives much expanded. An individual's physical memory, contemporary social interactions, or built infrastructure can all be considered as historical records that can potentially be read. These forms of archive are not reserved for historical analysis. They remain embroiled in the "sea of living memory" (Nora 1989, p.12), embedded as they are in the tangible and intangible infrastructures of society.

These challenges to a received dichotomy between archives and living memory have several consequences for both reenactors and academic historians. Firstly, it is important to avoid assumptions about the temporalities of different forms of historical record. Is it

accurate to conceive of archives as stable or permanent but performance as fleeting and ephemeral if we consider forms of song or dance that have endured hundreds of years (Borggreen and Gade, 2013)? Secondly, we are prompted to reconsider how we might make truth claims about the past. Neither archives or living traditions can offer unmediated access to the past. Historians are habitually skeptical about the evidentiary capacity of documentary records in archives, observing how archival remains are always to some extent fragments: that have been shaped by processes of deliberate selection, partial preservation, and reframing. It is important to be equally hesitant about seeing traditions of living memory, or the recreation of embodied practices as offering the opportunity to speak authentically or directly of the past. (McCalman and Pickering, 2010). The use of more diverse sources also shapes the possibility of making objective claims about the past. Historians have typically relied on a communal approach to establishing truth claims through peer review and accountability. Where one's own body is being used as a source of evidence is this still possible (Haines, 2017)? Have these definitional changes fundamentally shifted the concept of an archive from being a place for objective analysis to being a site for exploring competing forms of subjectivity? Finally, because archives have historically been associated with literate political elites, and high culture, whilst living tradition (including reenactment) has been associated with physical skills, popular culture, and illiteracy, then the blurring of the boundaries of these forms of historical memory has political consequences. Authority over historical truth is no longer reserved for those with the financial capacity to house historical records and employ people to maintain them.

In sum, exploration of the interplay between archives and tradition opens exciting new perspectives for reenactment studies. In light of recent literature and shifting definitions, the suggestion that reenactment can take performers or audiences beyond the archive seems harder to maintain. However, the use of creative methods to explore archival records;

conflicting ideas of authentic presence (the phenomenological authenticity of "real" human presence, versus the historical authenticity of documents and objects that are "really" of the past); the quest for new kinds of epistemologies that account for more diverse forms of archival memory; and the proliferation of digitally-mediated archives and performances, all suggest that exploring between material archival records and lived practices is likely to continue to be extremely fruitful.

ELIZABETH HAINES (UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL)

FURTHER READING

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BIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth Haines holds a Vice-Chancellor's Fellowship at the University of Bristol in the Department of History and is an honorary Research Fellow at the Science Museum, London. She has an interdisciplinary background that includes Fine Art and Geography as well as History. Her specialism is the history of colonial cartography in the twentieth-century, which she researches with a combination of archival research, landscape archaeology, interview, and film. She also has a strong interest in the exploration of historical scholarship through a variety of public-oriented formats including film screenings, radio broadcast, exhibitions, and theater. She is Chair of Outreach and Education Committee for the British Society for the History of Science.

Email: elizabeth.haines@bristol.ac.uk